

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 SP-02 SAB-02 PM-05
CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 HA-05 /059 W
-----053961 141600Z /43

P 141526Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7508
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 04228

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PN, OVIP (CARTER, JIMMY)
SUBJECT: LIBERAL PARTY REQUEST FOR MEETING WITH CARTER

REF: PANAMA 3999

1. AT THEIR REQUEST, I MET JUNE 13 WITH LIBERAL PARTY PRESIDENT DAVID SAMUDIO AND THREE OTHER PARTY REPRESENTATIVES TO HEAR THEIR CASE FOR A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER DURING HIS VISIT TO PANAMA AT THE END OF THIS WEEK.

2. SAMUDIO FIRST OUTLINED THE PARTY'S CONVICTION THAT STEPS MUST BE TAKEN TO RELIEVE PANAMA OF ITS DICTATORIAL GOVERNMENT. HE THEN EXPLAINED THAT HE ALREADY HAS COMMITMENTS FROM THE PRESIDENTS OF VENEZUELA AND COLOMBIA TO MEET WITH THE LIBERAL PARTY THIS WEEK-END, AND TO RAISE WITH GENERAL TORRIJOS THE QUESTION OF DEMOCRATIZATION OF PANAMA'S POLITICAL SYSTEM. HE ADDED THAT HE WILL BE CONFERRING WITH PANAMA'S FORMER PRESIDENT, ARNULFO ARIAS, WHO HAS JUST RETURNED HOME AFTER 10 YEARS IN EXILE. IF THE LIBERAL PARTY'S ATTEMPTS TO EXERT INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE ON TORRIJOS ARE UNSUCCESSFUL, AND IF ARIAS AGREES TO LAUNCH AN ANTI-TORRIJOS CAMPAIGN FOR THE
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PURPOSE OF RESTORING A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM TO PANAMA -- WITHOUT ANY PRIOR COMMITMENT AS TO WHO WOULD EMERGE TO TAKE POWER IN TORRIJOS' PLACE -- THE LIBERALS WILL THEN JOIN FORCES WITH ARIAS AND HIS PANAMENISTA PARTY. (A UNIFIED OPPOSITION OF THIS SORT COULD CAUSE CONSIDERABLE TROUBLE FOR TORRIJOS, BUT THE PROBABILITY OF SUCCESS IN OUSTING HIM IS DOUBTFUL.)

3. I EXPLAINED THAT A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE, NOT ONLY DUE TO THE TIGHTNESS OF HIS SCHEDULE HERE, BUT ALSO BECAUSE A MEETING WITH THE LIBERALS WOULD OPEN THE PRESIDENT TO CRITICISM ON TWO COUNTS -- ONE, FOR NOT MEETING WITH OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES, AND TWO, POSSIBLY, FOR "INTERVENING" IN PANAMA'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. HOWEVER, I REASSURED SAMUDIO AND HIS COLLEAGUES OF OUR SINCERE INTEREST IN AN INCREASED DEMOCRATIZATION IN PANAMA AND PLEDGED TO CONVEY TO PRESIDENT CARTER THEIR CONCERN FOR PANAMA'S POLITICAL SITUATION. I ALSO ASSURED THEM THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD WANT TO DISCUSS THIS ISSUE WITH TORRIJOS. JORDEN

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Message Attributes

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